

Such is the variety of bathing options, Myoko has its own resident onsen sommelier, Toma Kazuhiro, who provides visitors with a helpful guide to enjoying onsen in the area and how to properly bathe. Worth a look for both novice and onsen regulars, these tips can help you make the most of your onsen experience.

According to Toma, an easy onsen rule to follow is the Japanese concept of '*shichi-go-san*' or 'seven-five-three', which is usually a traditional rite of passage for children wishing them both health and luck while they are growing up. In terms of onsen, the seven-five-three formula refers to the seven onsen in the area, the five different qualities of onsen, and three unique water colors that can be found.

Toma suggests keeping five things in mind while bathing. Firstly, start and end your onsen time with a glass of water, as it is important to stay hydrated. Secondly, do not go straight into the onsen. Make sure you soak yourself down with *kakeyu* (adjusting your body to the water's temperature by pouring onsen water onto your body) before heading in. Start with your feet first, or the farthest point from your heart as you temper your body with the water. Thirdly, place a wet towel on your head when you are in the onsen — this can stop you from feeling faint or dizzy from the heat. The fourth tip is to break up your bathing into smaller intervals rather than bathing for one long period of time. By doing this you won't feel as faint, and you'll be able to enjoy the onsen to its fullest. The suggested amount of time if the water is around 42°C is a three minute bath followed by a three-minute break, and this process should be repeated a total of three times. At 40°C, Toma suggests you bathe for five minutes followed by a three minute break, then back in the water for eight minutes, followed by another three-minute break, and then finish off with a final three minute soak.

Finally, you don't always have to put your full body into the onsen. It can be just as beneficial to soak your legs from your knees down, alternating between hot and cold water to help get over symptoms of fatigue. Toma suggests using the *kakeyu* technique by pouring water onto your legs and feet for three minutes followed by pouring cold water over the same area three to five times. Alternatively, you can also soak your entire body in an onsen for three minutes followed by applying cold water to your legs and feet for one minute.